



## Pick Your Path to Health

### **Keep Yourself and Your Family Safe**

Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire.  
--Chinese proverb

#### **A problem neglected**

Mothers are always proud of their children. Asian women, in particular, are proud of how well their kids do at school and how well they behave at home.

Yet, do you realize that your child might be exposed to drugs at school or among friends?

Hard to believe it, right? You might say: "My kids will never do that!" Here is the cruel fact: more and more Asian American students are becoming addicted to drugs. It is happening to good kids who are making bad decisions.

Among a sample of high school students in California, use of marijuana ranged from 4% for Chinese to 35% for Pacific Islanders. Thirty-six percent of Pacific Islander students and 23% of Filipino students said they either may use drugs in the future, or are currently using drugs.

But wait. The problem does not stop there. Drug abuse has the same impact on you, as well as on your loved child.

Asian American women are also at risk for drugs due to cultural transitions and other stresses. The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse shows that during 1991-1993, 6.5% of Asian and Pacific Islanders exhibited illicit drug use. In 1994, Asian American women represented 1.1% of drug-related deaths among all women.

#### **It cannot be neglected any longer**

"My daughter took ecstasy, unwillingly, on December 30, 2000. She died January 4, 2001. This was her first and only time taking the drug. I will live with this always, and so will her brother and the rest of our family. Ecstasy KILLS."

This is a story excerpted from the Web site of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. And there are many other stories like that. You have to be aware of the danger drugs pose for you and your family. No one is immune to the relentless pressure of the drug world.

"Ecstasy is a serious problem among Asian American teenagers. It is usually sold illegally at parties," said Dr. Ford Kuramoto, M.S.W., the National Director at NAPAFA in Los Angeles. "Many teenagers are at first curious to have a try. But later on, they become addicted." The most common kinds of drugs used among teenagers are what we call, "club drugs" like LSD (acid), MDMA, (ecstasy), Methamphetamine (speed), and Rohypnol, GHB, and Ketamine (also known as date rape drugs). Date rape drugs are especially dangerous because they can be slipped into a girl's drink without her knowing. Other kinds of drug abuse include use of marijuana, inhalants, hallucinogens, tranquilizers, and sedatives.

"Parents need to be aware of the prevalence of club drugs. They need to take extra caution to ensure that their kids know these drugs can be extremely harmful," warned Dr. Kuramoto.

Sounds difficult? If you or your children use drugs, you may be living in fear of reprisal from a spouse or family members, or punishment from authorities in the community. Even if you are afraid, you must seek help to stop the drug abuse. Drug abuse can be deadly. It causes brain malfunctioning by changing brain chemistry, and if the drug is not pure, it may result in allergy, even death.

Chronic use of drugs is also closely related to other issues, such as low self-esteem, depression, physical abuse, or serious medical and infectious diseases like increased blood pressure, heart rate, and sexually transmitted diseases.

So, the first step is to prevent drug abuse in your family. Watch out for some common signs that your child is using drugs.

- Changes in the kinds of kids your child spends time with or in the style of clothes, hair or music they like.
- Lack of interest or motivation in school
- Changes in attitude or personality including bursts of anger or dramatic mood swings.
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Excessive money spending or money disappearing.

## Healing the Wound

"Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire."

The proverb reminds us that by working together, we can achieve far more than we ever could working alone.

Take the steps now to educate your child on the bad effects of drug abuse, and avoid using drugs yourself: You set an example for your children.

- Tell your child your expectations, and be firm. A simple statement like, "I expect you not to use drugs," can help a child make a healthy decision about drug use if you also explain the dangers of drug abuse.
- Check your home. Be aware of the products in your medicine cabinet, and ask questions if you notice any products that are used frequently or disappear.
- If you have doubts about your children's behavior, schedule an appointment with the school counselor or a private counselor to discuss your fears. The counselor will have some advice on the next steps to take.

If you do see a problem, there is no shame in seeking treatment for your child or for the whole family. Consult your family doctors. Try to be open and honest.

Many services are also available in your community. The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) hosts a 24-hour confidential hotline. Call 1-800-729-6686 to talk with an information specialist or ask for referrals to a local drug treatment program.

You may also want to check the Web site of National Drug Control Office at <http://www.druganswer.com>. It offers drug-related information in several Asian languages, including Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

May celebrated the Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month. It reminded Asian women of their long history and the current challenges. Collective denial cannot remedy the problem. Only when we face the issue together can solutions be reached that will help the whole community. In the meantime, keep a watchful eye on your children.

Drugs are not what you and your family want. Listen to your instincts; care for your loved ones, and you will find yourself on a path to better health.

**Other Resources:**

National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Hotline  
1-800-662-4357 (Drug & Alcohol Treatment Referrals)

National Asian Pacific American Family Against Substance Abuse  
(NAPAFASA)  
213- 625-5795  
<http://www.napafasa.org>

Asian American Recovery Services  
415-541-9285  
<http://www.aars-inc.org>

American Council for Drug Education  
1-800-488-3784  
<http://www.aca-usa.org>

National Institute on Drug Abuse  
1-888-NIH-NIDA (1-888-644-6432)  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov>

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."*